

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

6 June 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Principal Opportunities for the USSR in the Arab World

SUMMARY

Although the USSR and the Communists are unlikely to make any very substantial gains in the Arab world in the years immediately ahead, there are a number of possible developments that would, if they occurred, offer new opportunities to Moscow. If Israel were to acquire a nuclear weapons capability or if renewed Arab-Israeli hostilities should occur, the USSR might be able to acquire a privileged position or a significant degree of influence as the price of assistance to the Arabs. The Soviets might also profit, though on a lesser scale, from political upheavals within the Arab world. However, exploitation of vulnerabilities in the Arab world might also create disturbing dilemmas for the Soviets, and in any event local leaders will probably remain suspicious of Moscow.

25X1

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

DISCUSSION

1. The USSR has suffered a number of setbacks in the Arab world in recent months. Moreover, Arab nationalist leaders -- even those accepting Soviet aid -- have demonstrated considerable ability and determination to maintain their independence of action and to suppress local Communists. Indeed, we believe that the USSR and the Communists are unlikely to make any very substantial gains in the area in the years immediately ahead.^{1/} Nevertheless, the Arab world is going through an era of intense ferment, and there are a number of possible developments which could, if they occurred, offer new opportunities to Moscow.

2. The UAR-Israeli Advanced Weapons Race. The advanced weapons race between Israel and the UAR could provide one such opportunity.^{2/} Both Israel and the UAR are pressing the development of surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs), and this is already having political and psychological repercussions. Even more

^{1/} See NIE 11-6-63, "The Soviet Role in the Arab World," dated 24 April 1963 for a discussion of trends in Soviet-Arab relations.

^{2/} See SNIE 30-2-63, "The Advanced Weapons Program of the UAR and Israel," dated 8 May 1963.

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

disruptive would be the Israeli detonation of a nuclear device,

25X1

The

25X1

Arabs would hold the West responsible for this Israeli achievement and probably believe that the US could have prevented it if it had wished to do so. Such a development would almost certainly lead the UAR to appeal to the great powers for firm and categorical guarantees of its integrity. If the US failed to provide such guarantees or to take steps to prevent the Israeli acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability, Arab hostility toward the West would rise.

3. In these circumstances, the chances for the Soviets to make significant improvement in their relations with the Arabs, and the UAR in particular, would be good. The UAR would be likely to regard the USSR as its principal protector and, if it felt sufficiently threatened, might even grant the USSR a privileged position or a significant degree of influence as the price of support. While we believe that the Soviets would not provide nuclear weapons to the Arabs, they probably would supply additional modern weapons, possibly including SSMs, and might make some rocket-rattling statement designed to intimidate Israel and the West and to imply protection for the UAR. However, the

- 3 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

Soviets would be wary of becoming involved in any situation that could lead to a direct confrontation with the US.

4. Arab-Israeli Hostilities. Although we believe an outbreak of Arab-Israeli hostilities is unlikely in the next few years, there are several developments which could lead to such a conflict. For example, Israel might seize the West Bank of the Jordan River if a pro-Nasser nationalist regime were installed in Jordan; Syrian-Israeli hostilities could result from Israeli diversion of the Jordan waters; a Syrian-Israeli border incident might flare into larger-scale fighting; or the UAR might launch a preventive strike against the Israeli Dimona nuclear reactor to cripple Israeli nuclear capability. While the course of each encounter might be somewhat different, the Israelis have a clear military superiority over their Arab opponents, and the Arabs would be forced to rely on great power intervention to restrain the Israelis.

5. In this situation, the Soviets would have a new opportunity to appear as the champion of the Arabs if they provided diplomatic support and additional military aid. However, the extent of Soviet gains would depend heavily on Western reactions. If the Western Powers forced Israel to agree to an armistice and

- 4 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

to withdraw to its present boundaries, the Soviets might not find their position significantly improved among the Arabs. On the other hand, if the West were not able to restrain the Israelis, the Arabs would ascribe this to conscious US policy, and Arab leaders would be likely to rely more heavily on the USSR.

6. A Kurdish Revolt in Iraq. The movement for Kurdish autonomy in Iraq presents the Soviets with both opportunities and problems. If fighting should break out again, the Kurds in their search for allies may become more receptive to Soviet blandishments and might even conclude a tactical alliance with the Iraqi Communist Party, some of whose members have taken refuge from government persecution in Kurdish areas. On the other hand, despite their initial anguished attacks on the Baathist regime, the Soviets now appear anxious to retain as much influence and position in Baghdad as possible. They have, for example, offered to continue their substantial military aid to the Iraqi Government. While they almost certainly would provide the Kurds with some form of assistance, they would be unlikely to commit themselves so fully as to foreclose opportunities which might develop among the Iraqi Arabs.

7. A Revolt in Saudi Arabia. Opposition to the monarchy in Saudi Arabia is growing, fed by the upsurge of pan-Arab

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

reformist movements in neighboring countries. A successful nationalist revolution would offer the USSR an opportunity to establish diplomatic relations and to conclude assistance agreements. Even if the plotters were only partially successful and a civil war ensued, the Soviets in conjunction with the UAR might find an opportunity to intervene on the Yemeni model. This could further increase the willingness of the resulting Saudi Government to establish close ties with the Soviet bloc. Even should this occur, however, the Soviets would almost certainly fail -- as they have elsewhere in the Arab world -- to exert a dominating influence over the Saudis. In any event, the country's reliance on the West for a market for its oil would be likely to require a substantial US presence in Saudi Arabia for some years to come.

8. The Overthrow of the Monarchy in Jordan. King Hussein's position has been weakened in recent months, though the military probably will remain loyal. If his internal opposition should be able to subvert the military, the monarchy could not last, and its overthrow would provide new opportunities for the Soviet Union. The immediate threat of Israeli intervention, as well as the desire of the nationalists to balance Jordan's relations with the West, would probably lead a nationalist regime to establish

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

diplomatic relations with the Soviet bloc and to seek bloc aid. Although the Soviets would be likely to grant such support in order to gain a presence in Jordan, any successor Jordanian government would almost certainly be strongly nationalist.

9. Soviet Involvement in Yemen. The Soviets have some prospects for further gains in Yemen. While they were content to supply most of their aid indirectly through the UAR in the early stages of the Yemeni republican regime, the Soviets are now dealing directly with the Sallal government. Such a course has its own dangers for Moscow, not the least of which is the possibility of running into direct conflict of interests with the UAR. We believe that the USSR would be loath to alienate Nasser in this way and thus are unlikely to press vigorously to replace the UAR as the dominant influence in Yemen. However, if for any reason the UAR's ties with Yemen should loosen, the Soviets could be in a position to develop a closer relationship with the Yemeni Government. The Soviets may also hope to use facilities in Yemen and transit rights to facilitate their penetration of East Africa.

10. Instability in Algeria. The political and economic situation in Algeria offers the Soviet Union some hopes of

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

eventually increasing its influence there. Although to date Communist gains have been slight, the emergence of new leaders or a rupture with France over any one of many issues could radically alter the present anti-Communist trend and lead to closer relations with the USSR and other bloc countries. However, in view of the magnitude of the aid required just to keep Algeria afloat and the uncertainty of future trends in the country, we believe that the USSR would be reluctant to attempt to replace France as the primary source of foreign influence -- and foreign aid -- in Algeria.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

25X1

SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

25X1

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Cline
Mr. Kent

DCI approves recommendation to distribute
paper to USIB principals.

I have noted from Chet Cooper's notes that
this and similar papers are distributed in any
event.

Question: Is this cricket?

I have discussed this with Elder
W. Elder
& his squeezed away

17 June 63

ATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

25X1